

The CHANGE of Times and Seasons, considered and improv'd; both as referring to private Life, and to the Kingdoms of this World.

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S E R M O N

PREACH'D at the

Merchants Lecture

A T

S A L T E R S - H A L L,

On the 20th of *October*, 1724,

B E I N G

The Anniversary of the KING'S
C O R O N A T I O N.

By *S. WRIGHT.*

Publish'd at the Request of the Ministers then present; and the Managers of the Charity-School in Gravel-Lane, Southwark.

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THE CHANGE OF TIMES and SEASONS, con-
sidered and improved, both as relating
to private Life, and to the Kingdoms of
this World.

S E R M O N

Merchant Lecture

SALT HALL



The Anniversary of the King's
Coronation.

By S. W. G. W. T.

Prepared at the request of the Merchant
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DANIEL ii. 21.

And he changeth the Times and the Seasons.



HIS Book of *Daniel* has ever been esteem'd an inestimable Treasure to the Church and People of GOD. 'Tis partly *Historical*, and partly *Prophetical*; and all exceedingly entertaining and useful, to those that study it with an humble attentive Mind.

THE historical part of it is very moving and instructive; many *young* and tender Spirits have received early Impressions of Religion from it; and many also in their *after Lives* have been formed to great Constancy and Firmness in the Ways and Worship of GOD, by considering the undaunted steady Piety and Devotion of *Daniel* and his three Companions.

THE prophetical part has employed many learned and inquisitive minds, so as to afford great Improvement to *themselves*; tho' they have not been able to give full Satisfaction to others, in explaining the *things* foretold, and fixing the *Times* of their Accomplishment. The Uncertainty which there is, about the particular Meaning of these

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Prophecies, must not, however, be imputed to the Ambiguity or Obscurity of the Prophecies themselves; but to the great Uncertainty of human *Histories* and *Chronologies*, by which the Computation is made both of the Times and Kingdoms here described. That which is most important and comfortable to us, is most plain; and in this, all Interpreters agree, that while other Kings and Empires perish'd, the *Messiah* should be King of an everlasting Kingdom; the Foundation of which should be laid upon the *Redemption purchas'd by his Death*. (Of which Kingdom you have lately had an Account.) The prefixed Time of the *Messiah's* being cut off, was more clearly revealed to *Daniel*, than to any other *Prophet*. He saw the Accomplishment of all the ancient *Types* and *Ceremonies*, the Abolishment of them as to their further Use, and setting up the Service and Worship of God *in Spirit and in Truth*. He also foretold the *Messiah's* exercising his Dominion, by punishing the *Jewish Nation*, and by delivering and saving his *own People*; with the winding up of all at last, in the Resurrection of them that *sleep in the Dust*, their final Judgment, and the glorious State of those that *turn many to Righteousness*.

It is with an Eye both to the historical and prophetical Parts of this Book, that God is represented in the Words of our Text, as *Changing the Times and the Seasons*. Upon what happened in the Case of *Daniel* and his Companions, and also upon a Discovery of *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*, and the Meaning of it, the Prophet blesteth the God of Heaven in such Words as these: *Blessed be the Name of GOD for ever and ever, for Wisdom and Might are his, and he changeth the Times and the Seasons: He removeth Kings, and he setteth up Kings: He giveth Wisdom unto the wise, and Knowledge to them that know Understanding: he revealeth the deep*
and

With Respect to the Life of DANIEL. 5

and secret Things: He knoweth what is in the Darkness, and the Light dwelleth with him.

WE have here a Description of the governing Perfections of GOD; and also of the actual Exercise of them, with Regard to Seasons, and Persons, and all human Affairs. His rectoral Perfections here mentioned are these; *Wisdom and Omniscience; Might or Omnipotence; Wisdom and Might are his.* Omnipresence also is intimated, in his being not only with *Kings on the Throne*, but in *secret Places*; and his *Holiness* or perfect Rectitude of Nature, with the Righteousness of all his *Ways*, may be signified by *Light dwelling with him*; as it also signifies a clear and full discerning of all things. These Perfections of God are exercised in the Government of this World various Ways: Namely, in *changing the Times and the Seasons*; in ordering the Stations and Conditions of Men, *He removeth Kings, and setteth up Kings*; in guiding and enlightening Hearts and Spirits, *He giveth Wisdom to the wise, and Knowledge to them that know Understanding*; and then, in the Disposal of all Affairs, *He bringeth to light Things deep and secret*, either for the Accomplishment, or Disappointment of them, as he sees best.

IN this Order we might very profitably enlarge on the whole Form of Thanksgiving here before us. But I have chosen one *single Sentence* principally to fix our Thoughts upon, and shall only take Notice of the other Things here mentioned as they may serve to explain, and to give us a more extensive and useful View of these Words: *He changeth the Times and the Seasons.*

'Tis true, indeed, the whole Doctrine of a Divine Providence is implied and included in this short Sentence. Taking the Word [*Times*] in a general Sense; and the Word [*Seasons*] in a more limited Sense, for the Opportunities allotted to the several Works and Enjoyments of Life, there is nothing

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nothing which befalls Men, or that is to be performed and done by them, but might be set to View in giving an Account of GOD's changing the Times and Seasons. All those Times enumerated by *Solomon* in the 3^d Chapter of his *Ecclesiastes*, might properly be enlarged on. Where the several *Seasons* are mentioned, that serve for producing Things *Natural*, and those that serve for contingent and *voluntary Actions*: Those Seasons also that affect whole *Families* and *Kingdoms* might be considered, as they are there pointed at; with the Time of *Life*, and *Death* to particular Persons, and all the *intervening* Changes to which Men are exposed.

BUT I shall content my self at present in considering only such *Changes*, as the *Context* and the History of *Daniel* set before us. There are several Things observable in this Prophet's *own Life*, to which, without Doubt, he had a Regard when he is blessing and adoring the great Disposer of all Things. Tho' 'tis evident (as was hinted before) that the Change of Times and Seasons has a Reference to the *Kingdoms* of the Earth, which should be *set up* and be *overthrown* successively, according to the Interpretation of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Dream. The Prophet then foresaw the Times that should pass over Men, by Reason of such *Revolutions*, and blesteth GOD as the great Ruler of them. We may therefore consider the Words in both these Views.

1. As they refer to the *Life and Circumstances of the Prophet in particular*.
2. As they refer to *States and Kingdoms in general*.

THE APPLICATION will be made as we go along.

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I. LET us consider in what Instances GOD changeth the Times, as they refer to the *Prophet's particular Circumstances, and the Turns in his own Life.*

HE was taken from his native Country and Possessions in *Judea*, and was carried away a Captive to *Babylon*. In his Captivity he was chosen, with three of his Companions, to be instructed in the Learning and Language of the *Chaldeans*. By this Means they were to be prepared for the King's Presence, and for publick Service. Three Years were spent in studying the *Chaldee* Language, and other Things necessary to fit them for the *Babylonian* Court. During these Studies, *Daniel* was ordered a daily Provision of the King's Meat; but he chose Pulse to eat, and Water to drink. This Choice he made, not only because the *Babylonians* did eat such Things as were forbidden to the *Jews*; but that he might suit himself to his present Condition, as a *Captive*, and in a State of *Affliction*; and also, that he might shew how intirely his Hope and Confidence was in GOD.

AT the Time appointed for *Daniel's* being brought into the King's Presence, the State-Officer, to whom such Services belonged, introduced him and his Companions to *Nebuchadnezzar*. Upon the King's first communing with them, they were greatly esteemed by him: And 'tis added, that in all Matters of *Wisdom and Understanding*, about which the King enquired, he found them ten Times better than all the *Magicians and Astrologers* that were in all his Realm.

No sooner was *Daniel* brought into this Favour with the King, but a very strange and trying Thing happened, that might have proved his Destruction, as well as the Death of all the Wise-Men

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Ch. ii. Men of *Babylon*. The King was impress'd in so extraordinary a Manner by a *Dream*,
v. 1, 2. that he could not turn his Thoughts from it; and yet he could not recover it, so as to give any distinct Account of it. His Spirit was troubled to that Degree, he could have no Rest till it was found out. In the Height of
v. 3. this Uneasiness he threatens the *Chaldean* Wise-Men to cut them in Pieces, and
v. 5. to make their Houses a Dunghill, if they did not tell him his Dream, with the Interpretation of it. This at the first reading, or reciting, appears a most unreasonable Demand; but if you observe *Nebuchadnezzar's* stating the Matter afterward, you will readily fall in with it. He tells his pretended *Wise-Men*, that they prepared
v. 9. lying and corrupt Words before him; and they might give lying and false Interpretations of his Dream, should it be told them with all its Circumstances; but let them shew the *Dream it self*, and then he should depend upon their Wisdom and Knowledge truly to interpret it. The Matter being thus stated, we can't but allow, he judg'd right. That Wisdom and Discerning, which could certainly discover the Meaning of a prophetick Vision, could also discover the Vision it self. The Wise-Men tell him, that none but
v. 11. the Gods, whose dwelling is not with Flesh, could possibly come up to what the
v. 12. King required. At such a Reply *Nebuchadnezzar's* Anger was raised to Fury,
v. 13. and he commanded that they should all
v. 16. be destroyed. In this dangerous Case, *Daniel* interposes; desires Time, and that the Destruction of the Wise-Men might be stayed for a while: Then he goes and calls together his
v. 17. Friends, who join with him in desiring
v. 18, 19. Mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this Secret, and presently the Secret is revealed to him.

THEN

With Respect to the Life of DANIEL. 9

THEN Daniel blessed the **GOD** of Heaven, and said (among other Things) *he changeth the Times and the Seasons.* An immediate and very great Change there was, upon this Discovery: The King was appeased, the shedding of Blood prevented, and *Daniel* was promoted to be *Ruler over the whole Province of Babylon.*

v. 48.

AFTER this the *Jews* were exposed to the Severity of *persecuting Laws.* *Idolatrous Edicts* were made, and Conspiracies were formed to take away the Life of the *Prophet*, and his three *Companions.* When *Nebuchadnezzar* was driven from his Throne, and lived wild amongst the Beasts of the Field, *Daniel* seems to have made no Appearance in publick, but to have spent those seven Years in Retirement: For there is not the least Mention of any Thing concerning him, amongst those who had the Administration of publick Affairs, during the Banishment of *Nebuchadnezzar.* He was laid by, also, all the Reign of *Evil-Merodach*; no Notice being taken of him, after the Restoration of *Nebuchadnezzar*, till the Time of *Belsazzar* the Son of *Evil-Merodach*; at the end of whose Reign *Daniel* was again called to Court, and made the third Ruler under the King.

Ch. iii.

Ch. v. ver. 29.

UPON *Darius's* coming to the Throne, an Hundred and twenty Princes were set over the whole Kingdom, and *Daniel* was made *chief President* over those Princes. This rendered him an Object of their Envy to such a Degree, that they contrive to procure a Law that might take away his Life. In the Matters of his **GOD**, they soon find an Opportunity to accuse him; and upon their Accusation he is condemn'd, and cast into the *Lion's Den*: But there his God preserved him, and afterwards raised him to fresh Ho-

Ch. vi.

ver. 1, 2.

v. 7, 8.

12.

13.

16.

21, &c.

B

nours;

v. 24. nours ; upon which his Accusers with their Families, were cast to the Lions. Such Changes of Times and Seasons were there, in the Life of this good Man.

FROM this brief Abstract of the *History* of this Prophet, and his personal Circumstances, it appears,

I. THAT there are times of *Settlement*, and times also of being in an *unsettled State*, and both under the Direction of a superintending Providence.

THE time of *Daniel* and the *Jews* continuing in their own Land was determinately fixed ; and the Season when they should be *removed*, was foretold by their Prophets. The Days of their Captivity also in *Babylon* were number'd, and their sojourning there, was by the Order of Heaven. King *Nebuchadnezzar* was taught by one of the most exemplary and amazing Judgments that ever fell upon Man, to own the Disposals and Dominion of GOD in *establishing* and settling Men, or *unsettling* them, and driving them from the Possession of every thing.

IN like manner, *all Men upon the Face of the whole Earth*, are said to have the *Bounds of their Habitation fixed by God*. Acts xvi. 26.

THIS should teach us to own GOD, and beg his Direction in all our *Settlements* ; that our Thoughts and Contrivances may *fall in* with the Designs of Heaven, and that we may not expose ourselves to continual Trouble and Disappointment, by proposing to settle things for ourselves *otherwise* than GOD would have them.

WE should also learn, not to promise ourselves too much from the *Continuance* of any Settlement upon Earth. Those who are in the midst of all the Comforts of Life, may soon be thrown into an *unsettled State* ; their Blessings may be suddenly removed, - or they call'd away from them before they are aware.

On

With Regard to particular Persons. 11

ON the other hand, such as are driven from House and Home in one Part of the World, may find Friends, and meet with great Advantages in other Places, as *Daniel* did. The solitary may be set in Families, and the Strangers and Sojourners led to a safe and quiet Habitation. But then they must remember in all this, that the *most High doth according to his Will, among the Inhabitants of the Earth*, as well as in marshalling the *Army of Heaven*. He orders the Places and Situations of his Creatures in both Worlds, and gives Law to all their Actions.

2. FROM the History before us, we are led to observe, that there are times of *Discipline and Preparation for Service*; and there are also times of *Employment*, when Men are actually call'd to use the *Talents* with which they are endued; and both these are of GOD.

DANIEL and his Friends must have their Years of private *private Instruction*, before they are called to appear in publick. And after they had acted for a while in their *first Stations*, they are again cast into *Retirement*, and by the wise Methods of Heaven are form'd for *new Service*, to which GOD was pleas'd to call them. When Providence designs a Person for any eminent Usefulness, it also appoints those *preparatory Steps*, that shall furnish for it, and pave the Way to it. The Lives of *Joseph*, and *Moses*, and *David*, and others in the sacred Records, give us full Proof of this. And indeed, common Life itself, and daily Observation, shews, that the Times and Circumstances of Men's being *prepar'd* for Business, as well as of their acting *in it*, and following it, are under the Direction of a superintending Providence.

THIS should teach us *patiently to go through* the Seasons appointed, for instructing and forming our Minds to any useful Station and Employment

in Life. And all the Seasons of *Discipline*, in GOD's calling off from the Pursuits of this and the other Affair, by *Disappointments* and *Afflictions*, ought to be carefully improved. We should make the best of such Times, by laying in a Stock of *Knowledge*, or gathering up our *Experiences* of things; and especially *acquainting ourselves* with GOD, and learning to honour him, and to know our Dependance upon him, and to commit ourselves and Affairs to him.

AGAIN, when Men are put into useful Stations, it is their Duty to *act in them so*, as to serve the Purposes of GOD's Glory, and the Good of those about them, to the utmost of their Power. In every Business of Life, the Providence of GOD should be observ'd in all the preparatory Steps that lead to it; and then giving Opportunity and Ability to pursue it; and in all, Men should endeavour to suit themselves to the Designs of Heaven; to be just, and merciful, and diligent, and to walk humbly with GOD, doing all they can under these Regulations, both to provide for *their own*, and to promote the Interests of *Religion* and the *publick Good*.

3. WE may observe again, in the History before us, that there are times of *Favour and Success* in the World, and there are times also of *Reproach and Unsuccessfulness*.

ONE while, *Daniel* prospers exceedingly, and gains very great *Honours* and Advantages, both for himself and his Companions: Another while, they are expos'd to the most violent *Oppositions*, and are thrown into such a State of Neglect and Inactivity as to all worldly Affairs, that we hear nothing of them for many Years together. So *Nebuchadnezzar*, in one part of his Life, *was grown and become strong*: In another seven Years of it, he was cast out from all *Dominion*, and became

came more savage and *brutish* than ever any Man beside, that has been heard of: After this, he was restor'd to his Throne and Honours again; and in all, he was taught, not only to *acknowledge the King of Heaven*, but to *praise, extol, and honour him, all whose Works are Truth, and his Ways Judgment, and those that walk in Pride he is able to abase.* ch. iv. 37.

THIS should teach Men *Humility and Caution* in times of Favour and Success; that they do not value themselves too much, nor promise themselves a *certainty* of things going on in such a Course. They should not carry it *vainly*, so as to shew an irreligious Spirit and neglect of GOD; or encourage themselves in any *contemptuous* provoking Behaviour toward their *Neighbours*. But, as those that consider the Times may change before they are aware, they should act so, as not to be *confounded* in themselves, or give Occasion to the *Insults* of others, when the *Tables are turn'd*.

WE may also learn *Patience and Hope* in times of Reproach and Unsuccessfulness. GOD can make these very serviceable to the Improvement of our Minds, and he can clear up all in our Favour again, and direct to further Advantages of Life, if they may be good for us. So that let our Circumstances be what they will, we have always Occasion either to *rejoice* in the Mercy of GOD, or at least, to *hope* in it. But that leads me to add

4. THERE are Seasons of *Distress of Mind*, and of *seeking earnestly to GOD*; and there are times of *Light and Comfort, and rejoicing in GOD*.

Thus *Daniel* we find, one while, summoning his Companions to join with him in *desiring Mercies* of the GOD of Heaven; being in Darkness and Fear, and at a Loss as to what might befall them. Another while, he is *blessing GOD*, that gives Wisdom

dom and Knowledge, and reveals Secrets, and rejoicing in his Light. *Nebuchadnezzar* loses all the Exercise of Reason and Thought, for some Years; and then again, he *lifts up his Eyes* to Heaven, and *his Understanding returns to him*. *David* often speaks of God's changing the Times, in this manner, with him. *In my Prosperity I said, I shall never be moved; Thou did'st hide thy Face, I was troubled*. On the contrary, in another Place he says, *He poured out his Complaint, and when his Spirit was overwhelmed within him, God knew his Path*; from this Darkneſs he looks to God's *dealing bountifully with him*, *Pſal. cxlii. 3, 7*.

These Seasons ſhould teach us to honour a wiſe and good God by *trusting* in him, and waiting for him, in the moſt *diſtreſſful Hours*: And to be very *active* Servants for his Cauſe, and do all we can to propagate the Joys and Comforts of his Service, in times of Light and Mercy, and *clearer Discoveries* of things. We ſhould endeavour to credit Religion, by ſhewing the ſtrong *Supports*, and the wiſe *Counſels* it yields, in a time of Diſtreſs and Danger; and by ſhewing its Pleaſures and Triumphs, in times of God's ſignal Appearance to us and for us: We ſhould then fetch in all our brighter and more comfortable Ways of thinking, to recommend Religion, and Devotion, to thoſe about us.

5. THIS History leads us to obſerve, that there are Times of *being brought to the very Gates of Death*, and there are times of *Reſtoration* and *Deliverance*.

THE Sentence of Death, we find once and again paſſ'd upon *Daniel* and his Friends; but God that raiſeth the Dead, deliver'd from that Death to which they were condemn'd. He ſav'd in the *Fiery Furnace*, and in the *Lions Den*; and wrought moſt wonderful Deliverances, by bringing out of them unhurt, untouch'd.

So

So in other Cases, when good Men have been under a *Sentence* of Death, both in their own Apprehensions, and the Thoughts of all about them, GOD has deliver'd from those Distempers which appear'd *mortal*, and from those Dangers out of which there seem'd to be *no way* for escape.

THIS should teach us to look upon our Afflictions and Dangers as not coming by *chance*, or rising out of the *Dust*; but order'd as to the Time, and measur'd as to the Weight and Duration of them, by GOD. We should, therefore, make him our *Trust* and *Help* in all times of Sicknss, and under the Apprehensions of Death. We should look upon him as the GOD of Salvation, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ: *Who deliver'd us* (says the Apostle to the *Corinthians*) *from so great a Death, and does deliver, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.* Most certainly he will deliver, either from dying, or by dying, all those that are in *Christ Jesus*, to whom *there is no Condemnation.* 2 Cor. i. 10.
Rom. viii. 1.

FURTHER, we should learn from every merciful Restoration and Deliverance, to *devote* our renew'd Lives to GOD, in a Course of *new Obedience.*

Now considering the Life of Man as subject to all these Changes, and that all of us either have known, or may come to know, such variety of Times and Seasons, we should improve this Consideration to ourselves all the Ways we can. But I must omit, at present, what I had thought to say for the further Application of this Head, that I may pass on to the *other View* of our Text.

II. To consider the Words before us, as they refer to *States and Kingdoms in general.*

IN GOD's revealing to *Daniel* the Dream of *Nebuchadnezzar*, and the Interpretation of it, he had

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had a View of the Rise, and Fall, of several Kings and Kingdoms on the Earth. He saw the Glory and Strength of one, the Weakness and mean Condition of another. He saw the Wisdom and Success of the publick Administrations at one time, with the Darkness and divided State of Counsels and Managements at another time. He saw one Kingdom, as it were, a *Head of Gold*; and another that rose up, *inferior* to it; and a third, that is compar'd to *Brass*; and a fourth, that was as *Iron*, but mix'd with *Clay*, *partly strong, and partly broken*. The Time will not allow our going into the Explication of these things; and my present Subject only requires, that we observe the particular Instances of GOD's changing the Times and Seasons with reference to those different Monarchies, and Governments that are in the World.

1. IT is observable, that the KINGS which reign from time to time, *are removed, or set up*, by the over-ruling Providence of GOD.

THIS follows immediately upon its being said, that GOD changeth the Times and the Seasons; *He removeth Kings, and setteth up Kings*. From whence we are not only to conclude, that good Princes are of GOD, but those that are *base and evil* may, for a time, be rais'd up to serve the wise Purposes of Heaven; and to lead the Nations to the Knowledge of GOD, by what is sometimes ordain'd to come upon such Rulers. This is fully express'd in the 4th Chapter of this Prophecy, at the 17th Verse. Where it is expressly said, that the Calamities appointed to *Nebuchadnezzar*, were sent for this very end; *to the Intent the living may know that the most High ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of Men*. This is further exemplified in the vile Character, and dreadful End of *Belshazzar*, in the 5th Chapter of this Book.

Thus Kings are changed; and the bad, as well as the good, are removed, or set up, as the wise Purposes of GOD are differently to be served by them, or upon them.

2. HE changeth the Seasons under their respective Administrations, as to the *Light* and *Prosperity*, or the *Darkness* and *Calamities* that shall attend their Reigns.

THE *Fear* of GOD will make those that rule over Men, to be just and merciful, *as the Light of the Morning when the Sun riseth, even a Morning without Clouds; as the tender Grass springing out of the Earth by clear shining after Rain.* On the other hand, *Pride, Sensuality, and Idolatry,* will darken a Prince's Reign, and bring Misery upon a People. These things produce persecuting Laws, and for want of the Fear of GOD, they run all into Tyranny and Oppression: As the History of the Reigns in this Prophecy sadly proves. Such Abominations and Vices are encouraged, by this means, and such vile Affections are raised, as provoke GOD to send grievous Judgments. The Times and Seasons are changed under the Kings that are set up, according to their good, or ill Administration.

2 Sam.
xxiii. 4.

3. *THE Rise and Fall of Empires and Governments themselves, are, hereupon, order'd and overrul'd by GOD.*

THUS it has come to pass, that the chief Seat of Power and Dominion has been removed from one Part of the World to another. And after a Race of Kings in one Empire is extinct, and the Government itself entirely fails, another Empire is set up, and has its successive Monarchs for another Period of Time; and then, that also, has yielded to some new rais'd Dominion. Thus Daniel saw the *Babylonian* Empire flourishing

ing for a while, and then yielding to the *Medo-Persian*. He foresaw the *Persian* sinking, and giving Way to the *Grecian*; and the *Grecian* succeeded by the *Roman*. He foresaw also the utter Destruction of the *Jewish Kingdom*; and many other lesser Kingdoms might be mention'd, which are entirely dissolved and lost, as well as that; tho' none under such Circumstances of Ignominy and Disgrace. Thus God changeth the Times and Seasons, by the Rise and Fall of *Kingdoms*, as well as by removing and setting up Kings.

4. GOD's ordering all these Changes should be consider'd, *with respect to Religion, and the Advancement of his SON's Kingdom and Glory.*

THAT which was foretold should begin under the *Roman Empire*, is described further, as continuing and growing, throughout all succeeding Ages. It is represented, Verse 44th of the Chapter, where the Text is, after the following manner: *In the Days of these Kings, shall the GOD of Heaven set up a Kingdom, which shall not be destroy'd; and the Kingdom shall not be left to other People; but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these Kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.*

WHATEVER Blasphemies may be uttered by the Pope, and his Adherents, concerning Christ's having a *visible Successor* here on Earth, to exercise Dominion, and to lord it over his Heritage; the Scripture declares very expressly, that when the *God of Heaven shall set up his Kingdom*, it shall *not be left to Successors*, and given up to the Management of others, as the earthly Kingdoms before described, were. No Words can be plainer and stronger than those, *The Kingdom shall not be left to other People*; that is, neither to any successive *Monarchs*, nor to any *Synods*, and Combinations of Men; but as the King himself lives, and is seated on his Throne, he keeps the ruling,
law-

law-giving, judging Power in his own Hand, and none shall be able to *destroy it* : Yea 'tis farther said, that the breaking to Pieces of *other Kingdoms*, and the *consuming* of them, is ordered for the Enlargement and Establishment of the Kingdom of CHRIST, which shall stand for ever.

THESE Things may admit of very great and useful Enlargement in your own Thoughts; but I must not dwell upon them any further, save only by bringing what is said to our own Case and Circumstances in this Kingdom.

THE APPLICATION of these Words, as they refer to Kingdoms and Nations in General, may be in the following *Inferences*.

1. WE may learn from what has been said, to whom we owe *that Change of the Times*, which we are led to think of *on this Day*

THE 20th of *October* is a Day distinguished, in our *Calendar*, for the CORONATION of his present Majesty. A happy Day for this City, and this Kingdom, that the Crown was placed on so wise, and good, and experienced a Head; and that, in so critical a Season, when a few Months delay might have thrown us into *other Hands*, or at least have occasioned great Broils and Bloodshed to secure the present Settlement. When we think how many *Popish Families* are set aside to make Way for the Succession in the House of *Hanover*; and consider the Power and Interest of those Families in *Europe*; together with all the Arts, and Plots, and Riches of *Rome*, which has openly avowed the Cause of the King's Enemies; it must be owned, that a Crown *so placed* is directed by the Hand of Heaven.

IN the Advancement of King GEORGE, we have a joyful Proof of GOD's setting up the *best* of Kings; as at other Times there have been sad Instances of the *basest* of Princes and Rulers being

set over us. This Nation hath as much Reason to take Notice, of GOD's changing the Times and Seasons in this Respect, as any Nation upon Earth. Our Changes have been very *frequent*, and very *great*, from one Extreme to another. And on some Occasions they have proved very *sudden*; the most amazing *Revolutions* being brought about, as if *one* Nation had vanished, and *another* been born in a Day.

WHAT Times of War and Confusion! of Tyranny and Persecution! of Tumult and Rebellion! have torn and afflicted this Land? And on the other Hand, what Times of Peace and good Order! of Toleration and Mercy! of Triumph and Prosperity! have healed and revived us again? How have we been *lifted up*, and *cast down*, in this very Reign? What desperate Adventures were made to change the Times, by contriving Methods to enrich some of the basest of Men, and to ensnare some of the most cautious and wary; It is an amazing Thing, that under a Prince of so much *Steadiness*, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, any should dare to have practised such Frolicks, such Robbery: And 'tis astonishing that so many suffering Persons and Families, have yielded to their Calamities with so much Patience as they have done. How wonderfully hath a wise Providence conducted all these Changes, that they have neither destroyed our Civil Constitution, nor the Protestant Religion? Grant it, Almighty GOD! that no future Changes may ever destroy *these*.

2. WE learn from the Subject before us, that the *removing and setting up of Kings*, is a Matter to be observed and spoken of by the *Worshippers of GOD*, as well as by the *Politicians and Men of this World*.

THIS is not to be looked upon, as if we were exercising our selves in Things *too high for us*;
or

or as if it were a Matter wholly *out of our Province*, when we are in a Place of Worship, to speak of these mighty Acts of him we adore. Let these Things be kept only for special Occasions, and then the Scripture allows, and directs us, to turn our Thoughts this Way. In the History of *Israel* there are Records of the Times under the Reign of their Princes, according to what happened to the Nation in general, and to the several Parts of it distinctly. (1 Chron. xxix. last.) Not only the *Acts* and Reign of *David* were written, but *the Times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the Kingdoms of the Countries*. Thus the Prophet teaches us in our Text: So does the *Psalmist* also in the lxxvth *Psalms*, to take this into our Devotions, when we are acknowledging and praising GOD: Namely, that *Promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South: But God is the Judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another**. Ps. lxxv. 6, 7.

IF we look back to those Reigns, which have come within the Observation and Memory of several here present, we must celebrate the *Wisdom* of GOD and his *Might*, (as our Context teaches us to do) in the Change of *Kings*, as well as of *Times*. Much of GOD, hath appeared, in *communicating Knowledge* to Men, and in *revealing deep and secret Things*, for the Removal of one, and the Advancement of another.

How strange a Providence was there, in a *Papish Prince* being set upon the Throne, about 40 Years ago? How effectually did the Measures then taken raise a general Abhorrence of *Papery*, when it was making such haste to seize or to overthrow all before it? A Time of very great Affliction and Misery that was. The *Laws* that should have

* This is particularly and fully applied to the *Accession* of his present Majesty, in a Sermon published the last Year by Mr. *Earle*. pre-

prevented our Grievances, and *Parliaments* that only could *remedy* them, were both thrown aside; Liberty and Property were lost, and every Thing dear to *Englishmen* and *Protestants* laid at Stake.

IN a few Years, this Storm blew over: And King *James*, shamefully leaving his Throne and Kingdom to shift for themselves; the Prince of *Orange*, who was universally welcomed as a *Saviour* in the Day of Distress, was also made *Sovereign* upon our Deliverance; and was declared *rightful* and *lawful King* according to the Constitution of this Kingdom. A general Satisfaction and Happiness ensued, in setting the Crown upon the Head of this great *Deliverer*. Then the Nation revived and flourished again under the wise and healing Administrations of King *WILLIAM*, together with those of his amiable Partner Queen *MARY*.

BUT after the Joy for such a Deliverance had a little spent it self, how soon did the Clouds begin to gather again? Every Thing was contrived that might obstruct our Happiness, when those Princes were most solicitous to promote a compleat Settlement of Things, upon a truly Christian and Protestant Foundation; and the most amazing Oppositions were raised, against the kindest and greatest Designs, formed by those generous Friends to *Religion* and *Mankind*.

IN thus pursuing the Things that made for Peace, and for the Nation's more lasting Prosperity, the best of *QUEENS* resigned her Sceptre and her Breath; and a *KING* that was the Glory of *Europe*, lived only to double the Years of her short Reign, and to fix that *Succession* to the Crown in which we now rejoice, and then He also returned to his Earth; and many of the wise *Thoughts* and *Projects* of those great Princes dyed with them.

AFTER their Decease, another Prince arose, under whom the Nation enjoyed great Quiet and Happiness.

Happinefs for feveral Years at *home*; and ten Campaigns, not to be matched in History, roll'd on with vaftly great and uninterrupted Succefs in Wars *abroad*; and Fame founded its Trumpet loud, to publifh thro' the World, the Glory of the *British* Counfels and the *British* Arms. When — all on a fudden, an unaccountable Storm arofe; Houfes were battered, Places of Worfhip burnt, our Quiet was loft, our Succeffes ftopp'd, and the Voice of Fame was drowned, by the Clamours of *Faction*, the Hiffings of *Envy*, and the Bellowings of *Pride* and *Falshood*. I fhould add particularly, that a mighty Noife of the *Church's Danger* eccho'd from Place to Place, with a Multitude of other *Chimera's*, which *Jealoufy* and *Superftition* had forged and cherifhed, to darken the Times, and to bring about a Scheme of Things which has fince been expofed to publick View. The Reports of *Parliament*, and the Tryals of *State Criminals*, have unfolded to us that *Mystery of Iniquity*, which was then working.

At this lowering threatning Juncture, Queen ANNE was removed by Death; and her Crown and Throne given to his *prefent* MAJESTY; concerning whom, and our Happinefs in his Advancement, I have fpoken already.

SOON after this, another Remove of a grand *Monarch* was made in a neighbouring Nation; and a young King was fet up, under the Guardianship of one who proved a mighty Friend to the Houfe of *Hanover*, and peculiarly ferviceable to the Peace and Prosperity of this Kingdom, by his difcovering the fecret Conspiracies and Attempts that were formed to break in upon us. We may here alfo mention, the unaccountable *Shiftings* of a Crown in another Kingdom, which probably is ordered in Mercy to us, ftill to break *concerted Measures*, and to fet the Thoughts of fome Men to work afrefh in laying *Foundations*, who might o-
therwife

24 *The Change of Times considered*

therwise become very troublesome to all *Europe*, in raising a *Superstructure*. I cannot forbear repeating the Words of our Prophet again, in this Place ; *Blessed be the Name of GOD for ever and ever, who thus changeth the Times, and the Seasons, removing Kings, and setting up Kings; and doing this throughout the Earth, (in one Kingdom, as well as another) that he may fulfil all his Pleasure.*

3. WE should learn from what has been said, *to look and pray for the Advancement of Religion, and a Redeemer's Interest, by all these Changes.*

To these the GOD of Heaven has a principal Regard, in all that comes to pass ; as the latter end of the Chapter where our Text is, expressly declares. And whether *We* discern the tendency of things to promote the Kingdom of Christ in the World, or not ; yet certain it is, that this Kingdom shall, at last, prevail above all other Kingdoms ; and it shall be firmly establish'd, when they are broken to pieces. If therefore, we look, and pray, as we ought to do, for the Advancement of the Kingdom of GOD among Men, we then fall in with the Measures and Aims of Heaven, and can't be finally disappointed, as they will be who look no higher than the Kingdoms of this Earth.

GIVE me leave to add further, that every one of us, in our Stations, and according to our Abilities, should endeavour to make the Times, in which we live, as serviceable as we can, to promote Religion, and the Honour of our great LORD.

TIMES of Peace and Plenty, (as ours now are) should be improved in devising things for the Good of *others*, as well as for lengthening our *own* Tranquility.

MEN of Power and Prudence, would do well to bestir themselves, in such a favourable Season

as

as this, to get those things removed, which are found by Experience to divide and weaken the *Protestant* Interest, but are of no manner of Service to preserve us from the Practices of our common Enemies. Very great things are already done for our Settlement, and Prosperity; and they deserve our Notice. Faction is quell'd; Rebellions are suppress'd; Contentions of all kinds, are frown'd upon, and put to Shame; false Cries and Clamours are detected, and many *Refuges of Lies* are swept away; Persecution, and Superstition, are now both of them discountenanc'd; Plots and Conspiracies are disclos'd, so as not easily to be form'd afresh; Liberty and Property are secur'd; many have found their Account in the Revival of Trade and Credit; The Legislative Powers, (I mean the King, and his Nobles, and Commons) are perfectly united, and have a settled good Understanding with each other: And is not this a fit Season to take down, what is known to be a standing *Wall of Partition* and Separation amongst the peaceful and well-affected Subjects of this Realm? Would it not be of Service in the *Kingdom of the God of Heaven*, to do this, as well as a confirming and strengthening the Kingdom in the House of his present Majesty? The Men of *Issachar* were famous of old, for their *understanding the Times*; and happy is that People, who are blessed with such, that not only *know* how to speculate, and talk well of them, but also how to promote what is fit to be *done in them*. 1 Chron. xii. 32.

To draw to a Close; all good Men should improve the present *peaceful* Season, in doing what they can to propagate the Knowledge of God, and true Religion; and to promote a *Reformation of Manners*; since it is expressly threaten'd against them that *do wickedly*, that they shall be consumed, both they and their King. 1 Sam. xii. 25.

26 *The Change of Times improv'd*

IN such Times of Prosperity, *liberal Souls should be devising liberal things*; and a Season of so much Mercy and Plenty, as the present, should be improv'd, by abounding in all Acts of Mercy and Goodness, as proper Occasions offer.

AMONG other good Works, there is one thing that I am now to recommend to you, in a particular Manner; that is, your contributing to the Support of a *Charity-School in Gravel-Lane, in Southwark*. They have been us'd, on this Anniversary of the King's Coronation, to have a *Sermon*, and *Collection*, in former Years: I hope they will not fare the worse, for casting themselves upon the Benevolence of those who attend this *Lecture*.

The State of the *School*, as it now stands, is this.

It was begun in the Year 1687. And from that Date, it appears to be one of the first Schools of this Nature, that was set up. The Number of Scholars was then 40; afterward encreas'd to 50; and now is about 100. They are taught to read, write, and cypher: And are also instructed in the Principles of the Christian Religion, by their learning the Assemblies Catechism. Objects are received as such, without distinction of Parties, the general Good being intended. It is situated in one of the poorest Places about the City, among the poor Watermen, and Fishermen, whose Children would scarce be taught these things, were they not provided for in this Way.

The

By Works of Piety and Charity. 27

The Scholars have Bibles, Testaments and Catechisms given them; and some are put out to Trades: And it is the earnest Desire of the Managers, that it may become a yet more intire and compleat Charity.

THE larger your Contributions are, at these publick Collections, the better will the poor Children fare. More of them may be put out Apprentice into sober Families, or assisted in some Way to become serviceable to the Publick, instead of being a Charge or a Nuisance to it, as too many are. I confess to me it appears needful in these Charities, after the Instructions of a School, to put the Children into some Way to make a good Use of those Instructions. It is this that crowns the Charity. Those who are of these Sentiments will, I hope, be the more liberal in their Contributions.

THERE are two Arguments I would leave with you, taken from the Subject I have been upon, to excite your *Liberality*.

THE *first* is; That, since Changes are so frequent both in publick and private Affairs, every one should be glad to do Good while he hath it in the Power of his Hand, not knowing how soon the Times and Seasons may alter for the worse. We may not have such favourable *Opportunities* hereafter, or we may not have such *Ability* for Works of this Nature, as we have at present. Eccles. xi. 2. *Give a Portion to Seven, and also to Eight, for thou knowest not what Evil shall be upon the Earth.* If any Evil should come, it will be a very great Satisfaction and Comfort to think, that in a Time of Ease and Prosperity, we were always ready to minister to the Necessities of others: We may then reasonably hope that others will be ready to

28 *The Change of Times considered &c.*

to minister to us. This, however, we are sure of, That there is a Reward with GOD.

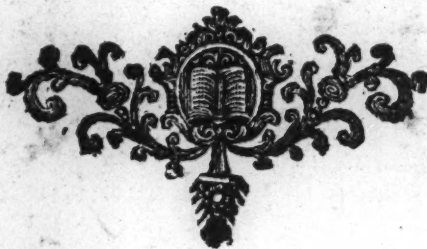
THE other Argument is; to consider seriously our present Advantages, in GOD's changing the Times as at *this Day*. By all the Blessings that you enjoy under the present Government, and all the Calamities you have escaped in being delivered from other Hands, you are called upon to make such *Acknowledgments* as these to GOD. Our Gratitude should not be in Word and Compliment only, but in Deed and in Truth. If our Works of Charity on these Occasions could be brought to bear a *Proportion* with what is spent in other Ways of rejoycing, how much Good might every such Day produce? Whilst others spend freely in their sinful Excesses, let us communicate chearfully for the Relief of those who are the present Messengers of Providence to solicit our help.

Now may he that changeth the Times and Seasons accept our Service, and continue and increase our Blessings: But may we also be prepared for the Loss of them, and for parting with them whenever GOD shall so require: And may we be so happy as to find all Things working for our Good, thro' JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

To him be Glory for ever. Amen



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